

The following resolutions were carried by the meeting:—

1. That a Committee appointed by the County Council would be the best authority to carry out the Act.

2. That inspection would be best carried out by or under the supervision of a County Medical Officer of Health or a fully-trained Nurse Midwife under medical supervision, and not connected with Nursing Associations.

3. That the best form of Rural Midwife is a woman with an intimate and practical knowledge of the care of the working class.

### Legal Matters.

#### NURSE CHARGED WITH THEFT.

Mrs. Phillips, residing in Exeter, who it is stated has an extensive nursing connection among the wealthier residents of the city has been arrested on a charge of theft, the accusations involved being of an extraordinary nature.

For years the police have been receiving complaints as to robberies by well-to-do persons, and have endeavoured unsuccessfully to discover the author of the theft. Recently, suspicion fell upon Mrs. Phillips, and on paying an unsuspected visit to her house, the police found it was stocked with goods of every description, some of which it is alleged were at once identified as having been missed from houses in which Mrs. Phillips had been nursing. So numerous were the articles discovered that a van and two cabs were requisitioned to remove them to the police station. They included massive pedestals and vases, jewellery, bracelets, watches, linen, and china, thirty or forty umbrellas, and innumerable walking sticks. One room not yet touched is stated to present the appearance of a storage warehouse and is packed four feet high with goods. Mrs. Phillips was formally charged at the police court with stealing a vase, with a pedestal (standing some 4 feet high) from the entrance hall of a house. Further developments of this case will be awaited with interest.

#### COWAN v. MORRELL.

The hearing of an action for libel and slander before Mr. Justice Jelf, in the King's Bench Division, brought by Miss Mary Cowan against Miss Ada Thurza Morrell, both of whom are engaged in nursing work at Putney, brought out several points of interest to both nurses and the public.

Mr. Wildey Wright, who appeared for the plaintiff, observed that the defendant admitted that she wrote the letters complained of, but pleaded that they were true in substance and fact. He stated that the plaintiff (Miss Cowan), after passing through a hospital training, opened a nursing home in Putney. Miss Morrell and her two sisters carried

on a business in the same district, by which they supplied nurses to the public, charging a commission. In December, 1902, the plaintiff was asked by the defendant to send a nurse to Haslemere, but as she declined to pay the commission the defendant wanted, the latter was annoyed and threatened to injure her. Later, when a Mrs. Groom wanted a nurse, she applied to the Misses Morrell for information as to the plaintiff's home. She asserts she was informed that the home was not a respectable place.

Mrs. Lavinia Groom, of Gateley Road, Brixton, said she carried on a nursing home in the name of Mrs. Richardson. On one occasion, her home being full, she wanted to find a place for another patient. She made inquiries about the plaintiff's home from the Misses Morrell, in the first instance about a maternity case for a "foster daughter," and received the two letters containing the alleged libels. She wrote from a newspaper shop, not from her own address.

Asked by counsel why she wrote from such a place in a false name, she said: "It is not a false name but a business name; why do you gentlemen do it?" Questioned further, she said: "It is usual, as people keeping nursing homes are so bigotted one against another, and monthly nurses are just the same." Witness said she also wrote in the name of Foster for the same reason. She was not sure the Morrells were really nurses. It was not everyone who put on a uniform who was a nurse.

Questioned as to the handwriting of the letter, the witness asserted it was written for her by one of the County Council Inspectors, and stated: "Mine is a registered home; we help the inspectors, and they send us cases."

Miss Mary Cowan, who said she resided at 38, Santos Road, Putney, said she supplied nurses to the public; she also received medical, surgical, and maternity cases. In 1902 she engaged Miss Alice Morrell, a sister of the defendant, for a case. There was subsequently a dispute. Her sister, Mrs. Ryle, was Superintendent of her home. Miss Henstridge came to her in 1902 as useful help, and paid her 10s. a week. Later this lady invested £100 in the home. (N.B. The plaintiff was sold up because she could not repay this sum.) Questioned as to money which she owed Nurse Hawker, the plaintiff said the nurse "worked it out on the case." Nurse Hawker now owed her about £30. She earned £8 8s. a month, and her salary was only £2 10s. "I ought to have had the balance," said the plaintiff, "but did not get it."

The witness also said that Mrs. Groom's "foster daughter" came to her and had a child in the home.

Mr. Justice Jelf said he should tell the jury that the occasion of the letters was distinctly privileged, and in the absence of express malice there was no case of libel. He thought the slander was also an

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